

Application No.: 10/664628
Amendment dated: January 17, 2006
Reply to Office action of 10/05/2005

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Please enter the amendments as presented in the response filed on December 15, 2005.

The claims currently presented are readable on the elected species.

In the advisory action of January 4, 2006, the Examiner noted that the reason why the proposed amendment did not place the application in condition for allowance was that the applicant's arguments were considered not to be commensurate in scope with the then current claims, i.e., the claims containing the term "high molecular weight elastic section." The proposed amendments were also considered to require further consideration and/or search. With the entry of the amendments previously presented, the arguments are now entirely consistent with the claims, and are repeated below.

In each of the rejections, Hagfors is relied upon as teaching that it is known in the papermaking belt art to use fibers with an average protruding length between 0.01 and 3 mm, as claimed in claim 1. Hagfors discloses a range of 1 to 30 μm , which corresponds to 0.001 to 0.03 mm. Since 0.03 mm is greater than 0.01 mm, Hagfors' range overlaps the range claimed by the Applicant. However, Hagfors' range and the Applicant's range refer to two different things. Hagfors range refers to the average surface roughness Ra of the transfer belt; not to the average length of protruding portions of the fibers at the belt surface. Hagfors says nothing at all about the average length of any protruding portions. Moreover, as explained by Hagfors, at column 1, line 67 - column 2, line 2, the surface roughness "can be controlled not only by the roughness of the abrasive means but also by the degree of fineness of the fibre," thereby confirming that surface roughness is related to abrasive roughness and fiber fineness, rather than to the length of protruding portions.

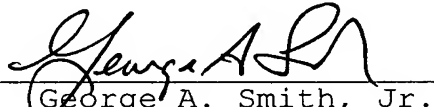
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As Hagfors' drawing is relied upon as teaching protruding fibers, it should be noted that Hagfors' FIG. 1 depicts surface fibers some of which are oblique, and others of which are parallel to the belt surface. In the case of the oblique fibers, about one-half of the length of each fiber is exposed. In the case of the fibers oriented parallel to the surface, the entire fiber is exposed. Hagfors mentions, at column 3, lines 12 and 13, that the fiber length is typically 10 to 150 mm before needling. With the lengths of the fibers in this range, the average length of the protruding parts would be at least about 5 mm, well in excess of Applicant's claimed upper limit of 3 mm. As shown in Applicant's FIG. 12, examples 2-5, in which the average length of the protruding parts of the fibers was between 0.01 and 3 mm, were far superior to example 7, in which the average length of the protruding parts was 6.8 mm.

In summary, Hagfors does not teach a wet paper web transfer belt in the average length of the protruding parts of fibers which protrude from an elastic section is between 0.01 and 3 mm.

Favorable reconsideration and allowance of claim 1, and its dependent claims 3, 5 and 7, are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,
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